

## ***Frequency and Duration of Food Insecurity and Hunger in U.S. Households***

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"Frequency and Duration of Food Insecurity and Hunger in U.S. Households"

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**T**his is the first nationally representative study of the extent to which food insecurity and hunger are frequent, recurring, or occasional in U.S. households that experience them. "Food insecure" means being uncertain of having, or being unable to acquire, enough food to meet basic needs because of a lack of money or other resources.

National food insecurity and hunger statistics published annually by USDA reflect whether households experience those conditions at any time during the year. This study adds temporal perspective to the annual statistics.

ERS researchers found that about two-thirds of the households classified as food insecure in the annual reports experience recurring episodes of food insecurity during the year and about a fifth experience food insecurity frequently or chronically. Even so, on a typical day, the prevalence of food insecurity with hunger is only about 13 to 18 percent of the annual rate. For example, in 1998, people in 3.7 percent of U.S. households were hungry at some time during the year because of inadequate resources. On a typical day in 1998, this occurred in about 0.6 percent of households.

The findings add credibility to food security statistics based on the U.S. food security scale. The researchers used data from the August 1998 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement, including the household food security scale and constituent items.

